

**From:** Barbara J. Dwyer [mailto:hlthcom@earthlink.net]

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2008 12:05 PM

**To:** MLPAComments

**Cc:** Jesus Ruiz

**Subject:** another diver urges establishment of State Marine Reserves in the No. Central Coastal Study Region

To the MLPA Committee:

As an avid [non-consumptive] sport diver and California homeowner/taxpayer, I strongly urge you to extend Gerstle Cove State Marine Reserve and to establish Fort Ross as a State Marine Reserve. Preservation of these areas accomplishes MLPA's goals #3 and #4.

The California State Marine Life Protection Act requires establishment of protected marine areas for consumptive and non-consumptive recreation (Goal #3). Non-consumptive divers agree, and we believe that somewhere within the North Coast Project, some areas should be delineated for non-consumptive use. To date, no such marine reserves have been earmarked. We propose that Gerstle Cove and Ft. Ross are the best candidates because (according to the NOAA National MPA Center Active Recreational Use Pattern) they already are the two north coast sites most used by underwater photographers and newly certified open water divers. Sport free divers, free dive and scuba instructors, as well as local dive clubs often gather at these areas for weekend outings.

Establishing and preserving heritage marine-protected areas is a key concept of MLPA (Goal #4). Gerstle Cove and Fort Ross are already established and protected State Parks. Mandating preservation of these small MPAs will qualify under goal #4 of the State Law. Ten years of marine ecology study at Gerstle Cove (under the direction of Dr. James Grass) shows that abalone and other marine life are substantially more abundant at this presently established Marine Reserve and that the abalone is carried south into the next two coves. What better evidence do we need to argue for its protection?

I've been a certified diver since 1978 and never have taken a living creature. Just as consumptive diving has its place, abalone and other marine populations require the the protection to replenish themselves. One needs only to look to other protected areas, such as Pt. Lobos State Park, to see the benefits of protection. We are visitors to the ocean and owe respect to the ecosystem and its inhabitants. For these reasons, I strongly request that you consider designating Gerstle Cove and Ft. Ross into State Reserves.

Best regards,

Barbara J. Dwyer, RN, MA

PADI (Professional Association of Dive Instructors)

DAN (Divers' Alert Network)

NACD (National Association of Cave Divers)

NSS-CDS # (National Speleological Society-Cave Diving Section)

UHMS (Underwater Hyperbaric Medical Society)